

TRANSFORMATION OF PRIVATE TO COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP. MARXIST THEORY AND PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION

In the history of mankind ownership, in its various forms, has played and will continue to play a decisive role in the relations between people. The theoreticians of Marxism have consistently been preoccupied with the matter of ownership and especially with that of its socialization.

The leadership of the countries of existing socialism avails itself of every opportunity offered in order to declare that they have always been strictly adhering to Marxist teaching and its principles (Vedenskiy, 1954 : 317, Extraordinary, 1959. 92; Kapitonov, 1981. 11 ; The Institute, 1982:577-590). They maintain that «real socialism» is the most cogent proof of the triumph of Marxist theory «carried forward by communists and workers' parties» (Mileikovsky, 1978 : 45), while anybody suggesting that Marxism is being applied dogmatically and not creatively in USSR, is severely criticized (Dvornik, 1979 : ch. VII ; Fedoseyev, 1972 : ch. I).

It is ascertained that the leaders of countries, following the Soviet model have remained faithful to Marxism, mainly theoretically, when in fact they have implemented a policy which is in most obvious contradiction with the teaching of the founders of Marxism. The latter outlined methods for transforming of society which are diametrically opposed to those implemented in the countries of existing socialism, a fact evidenced clearly by the transformation of private to collective ownership too. This transfer has not led to higher, as compared to capitalism

labor productivity, because it took place before the creation of the necessary conditions.

I. THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP

According to Marxist theory, the route to socialism passes through successive stages, each one of which constitutes a necessary prelude to the next one. The diminution of small business and the growth of big ones provides the possibility for maximum utilization of the achievements of science and technique, for the achievements of high productivity and production of abundant goods necessary for the construction of a socialist society.

It takes time to cover the above stages and promote the advantages of a new way of life. According to Engels, the transition, for example, of the small land cultivators to collective labor was supposed to happen in the following way. The big agricultural estates were to be given over to cultivation-under the control of the society - to the workers who were cultivating them, organized in comrade teams. Their example was to convince the small land cultivators - and not only them - about the advantages of big cooperative cultivation. (Marx, Engels, 1962a : 523).

However, in order that the land cultivators and generally the small to medium size producers be convinced about the advantages of the big cooperative enterprise, the latter would have to develop a comparatively higher labour productivity which is a necessary precondition for an increase in revenue and for the improvement of the working conditions of the people. Anyway, it is impossible to achieve higher productivity in the absence of right subjective and objective conditions. The process of getting the right conditions is a result of a long evolutionary process and not determined by arbitrary deeds and forced actions. The people may help in speeding-up this process but they cannot ignore the laws of economic and social evolution, especially as no guidance can be sought from earlier generations or from the experience of other countries.

The Stalinist leadership believed that the speedy collectivization of the small producers and merchants in the city (as well as in the village) and the generalization of the large producers would create the «unified economic basis of socialism - the collective ownership» (Buzlayeva, 1969 : 173), which would provide the opportunity to plan the development of the economy on an all - Union scale. This would

inevitably lead to growth of productivity at astounding rates, resulting in an abundance of goods and in the construction of socialism.

Stalin and his followers thought that the natural ripening of the objective conditions was useless and dangerous for the first socialist country and a waste of time. Proceeding from the principle that the small - size production of goods and the millions of small- size producers of the city and the village create a favourable environment and suitable conditions for the development of capitalism, they believed that what was necessary for the success of socialism was «to banish the capitalist elements from the industry and the agricultural economy» (Buzlayeva, 1969 : 76, 173). They were neglecting the fact that Marx attached great importance to the small bourgeois class, regarding it as a component part of all social revolutions to follow (Marx, Engels, 1962b : 412).

An analysis of the policy followed in the period of industrialization and collectivization shows that the main opponents of the Stalinist rule were not those exploiting the labor of the others-in other words-the capitalist. Estimations on the basis of facts given in the work of Aroutiounan (1971 : 32) show that the bourgeois class numbered 284 thous. people and constituted less than 0,2 per cent of the population. In big industry the private sector hardly engaged 276 thous. people, or 8 per cent (Bouzlayeva, 1969 : 75). Hired labor was limited in agriculture as well (See Danilov, 1970 : 146), due to imposed restrictions as well as because of the small- size farms¹. Similar was the situation in handicraft too. In 1924/25 there were about 2 mln. handicraft enterprises engaging 2 mln. 625 thous. people. If taken into consideration that in handicraft, due to the nature of labor, is engaged a good number of the members of the families of the handicraftsmen, then it may be concluded that the branch was dominated by the small - to - medium size handicraftsmen. A special committee that carried out a profound research in 1926/27, concluded that private capital did not have the power to threaten socialism and that its proportion in industry and trade was decreasing from year to year. The above conclusions were also confirmed by other committees, as well as by data of Statistical Service and State Plan (Buzlaveva, 1969 : 81).

In the period of Soviet rule the middle classes did not diminish as before the revolution. The granting of credits, loans, the tax exemptions, donations and the like, to the poor, the restrictions and the taxes levied on the well - to - do, led to a growth of the middle classes, not only in number but also in proportion.

1. After the revolution, land was redistributed in equal shares according to the members of each peasant family.

In 1926/27, for example, the proportion of the middle class peasants reached 62,7 per cent as against 61, 1 percent in 1924/25 and 20 per cent in 1913. In machines and tools of production reached 79 per cent. These developments evidenced the fact that the peasants «were transforming rapidly into middle class» (Danilov, 1970: 142-9).

The position of the Stalinist leadership was, therefore, threatened not by capitalists but by the millions of petty to middle class producers that were refusing to follow its policy. Those using their own labor and that of their families constituted an obstacle because they would never consent to dissociate themselves from their shops, their land and tools and change fundamentally way of life and work, without a previous practical conviction that such a transfer would be in their interest. And, so it seems, no adequate conditions to convince them were available at the times.

It was impossible to convince the peasants, for example, about the advantages of big production when in 1927 the state and collective farms produced only 1,3 mln. tons of grain, while the kulaks - 9,6 mln. tons. The farm estates of the kulaks certainly numbered 1 mln., as against almost 200 thous. of those organized in the kolkhoz. However, the latter were situated mainly in grain producing regions and were 4-5 times better equipped with machines and tools than the private farms and had the whole-sided economic and technical assistance of the State. As regards the state farms, these were large agricultural enterprises run with the help of the science of agronomy and with the use of modern machines (Bogolyubov, 1983 :48, 49 ; Danilov, 1970 : 187, 190). In 1934, when it was supposed that the great difficulties had been overcome and the serious mistakes corrected, in Ukraine, the granary of the USSR, 80 per cent of the kolkhoz were giving to the kolkhozian worker (with an annual average of 166 workdays), for each working day, nearly 2 kilos of grains, that is, 900 grams a day (Nemakov, 1961 : 126). If the collective farms showed the «advantages of collective labor and large- scale farming» and the State farms «served as models for the mass peasants» (Bogolyubov, 1983 : 48), then the peasants would willingly join the kolkhoz and there would be no problem.

The hostility of the petty and middle class producers towards the cooperative farms of higher form (productive) and their manifested preference to those of ordinary form (credit, supplying etc.) put a dilemma before the Soviet leadership, that is, to either abandon its plans for mass and rapid transition from private to collective labor and ownership, or use force in order to realize it. Stalin and his followers implemented the second solution, believing that with the ani-

hilation of private peasants and handicraftsmen and with their compulsory interposition in the cooperatives of higher form, the process to socialism would be accelerated.

It is maintained that with his works and deeds Stalin «developed creatively» Marxism (Vedenskiy, 1954 : 317 ; Alexandrov, 1950). It is ascertained, however, that Marx outlined methods of transforming of society which are diametrically opposed to those implemented by Stalin and his successors who only managed to create the Soviet paradox with their deeds (Fakiolas, 1983).

II. ABSENCE OF FAVOURABLE OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS

After the October Revolution, the Soviet State expanded to activities it could neither control nor direct. It was admitted that the small - to - medium size enterprises proved to be «an excessive burden» and that was nationalized and confiscated more than what could be handled (Sorokin, 1967 : 41).

With the implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and the granting to the small - to - medium scale businessmen the opportunity to develop their production, the economy recovered and the country healed its wounds rapidly. In comparison with 1920, in 1927 the volume of agricultural and industrial production increased nearly 2 and 8 times, while the railway transportations increased 6 times (Alexandrov, 1967 : 67, 176 ; *Mirovaya Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodniye Otnosheiya*, 1967., No. 9, 29). However, regardless of the progress noted, at the end of the 20s were absent the necessary economic, educational, psychological and organizational conditions that could enable the realization of fundamental transformations, such as the abolition of the private sector of economy in which was engaged the great majority of the population², in one decade. The degree of unripening of the objective conditions is shown also by the fact that in 1926 82,1 per cent of the population was living in the countryside and in 1928, 80 per cent of the working people was engaged in agriculture, as against 21 per cent (1930) in USA (Kendrick, 1961 : 96).

2. In 1924-28, 80 per cent and more, of the population was working on a private basis (peasants, craftsmen, free professionals and businessmen). Workers and employees hardly constituted 17 per cent, while the cooperated peasants and craftsmen were less than 3 per cent (National, 1956 : 19).

When the implementation of the plans for industrialization and collectivization started, the technical level of the industry, transporations and agriculture was low (Rosenfeld, 1961 :206) and the country was lagging behind the more developed countries 50- 100 years (Extraordinary, 1959 : 459). In 1926, 45 per cent of the population was illiterate (Borisov, 1975 : 187), while the percentage of illiteracy among the peasants reached 55 per cent (1928)-(43 per cent for men and 66 per cent for women). Even the members of the communist party who were to play the leading part in the fundamental transformation of the country and its elevating to levels unapproachable even for developed countries, had low intellectual level. In 1927, 90,1 per cent had not even finished primary school and only 0,8 per cent had higher education³.

What was pursued was the creation of an enormous, and at the same time, modern industry with a working force of most base technical and educational level. In 1927/28, the proportion of mechanics and technicians in the total number of workers barely reached 2,3 per cent and was sometimes less than the one existing in advanced countries (Podkolzhin, 1968 :228). In the period of the Second Five-Year Plan (1932-33), the workers had an average of 3,5 years of school education.

To realize the hasty industrialization and the forced collectivization, apart from the unanimous and intensive use of human force⁴, the standard of living was compressed to unacceptably low limits, with the aim of achieving a high percentage of accumulation⁵. Due to the aggravated conditions which emerged in the supplies of the cities in 1928, a coupon system on the distribution of bread, sugar and other foodstuffs, as well as on certain industrial products was adopted (Vinogradov, 1977 : 451 ; Samuelson, 1977 : 874). The housing problem was aggravated to the maximum. It is estimated that the dwellin space of the people who enjoyed a comparatively «comfortable space» came up to less than 3 sq. meters per person (Fakiolas, 1982 : 103). In 1935, a separate apartment was considered to be something «very rare» (Borisov, 1975 : 290 ; Dmitriev, 1973 : 106).

3. Communist, No 18, 1982, p. 11.

4. It is understood by the term «human force» that individuals (under - age, etc.), not belonging to the working force, were also used.

5. The high percentage of accumulation «has been and still is, a characteristic feature of the economic development of the USSR» (Kozlov, 1967 :148). See also Jacoby and Howell (1967 : 70).

The unprecedented privations suffered by the Soviet people in time of peace are contradictory to the proclamations of Marx and Engels (1955 :26), who underlined that a foremost condition of every human being and, consequently, of every history, is that people should have the opportunity to live in order to write history, especially as food and shelter are basic necessities. On the basis of the above, the allegation that in the USSR, for the first time in history, was consolidated a social system where «the care for the man has become a supreme law» (Maroushkin, 1972 : 149) is futile.

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The technical equipment of the Soviet agriculture was very limited. Estimations show that till September 1927, there was a total of 28 thous. tractors, of which 90 per cent was imported and that more than two kolkhoz were corresponding to each tractor (Podkolzhin, 1968 :212 ; Stanis, 1976 : 159), while there was not even a single harvester. In 1926, the share of mechanical engines (excluding car engines), was corresponding barely 1,7 per cent of the driving force used in agricultural production (Danilov, 1970 : 137). For the sake of comparison, it is worth mentioning that USA provided 920.000 tractors to their agriculture (1930). They also provided 111.000 harvesters and 900.000 lorries, as against 2 and 700 respectively (1928) of the Soviet Union. In the United States, 11 per cent of the agricultural estates were electrified and 100.000 of them had milking devices, which were non-existent for the Soviet Union (Manoukian, 1966 : 53 ; National, 1958 :487 ; Alexandrov, 1967 : 187). In the USSR, the share of electricity in the structure of consumption of energy in agriculture amounted barely to 0,2 per cent (1928), as against 2,5 per cent of tractors and 94,8 per cent of animals (National ,1956 : 150). In 1927 there was one seeder per 37 households> one harvester per 24 households and one field mower per 56 households (Bogolyubov, 1983 :27).

The point of view implying that «historically no class has been more difficult to organize than peasants» is correct (Morozov, 1977 : 45). This is especially valid for countries of relatively low level of development, characteristic of the Soviet Union in the pre-war period. There is no room for doubt, that not only the USSR, but even a developed country, could ever regulate the organizational problems of collectivization of tens of millions of small - to - medium size producers in such a short period of time.

The absence of right objective conditions and the lack of elementary preparations resulted in having «an enormous number of kolkhoz» in the Summer of 1928, impossible to supply with machines and tools, because none of these were provided for by any plan. The peripheral committees of the kolkhoz were sta-

ting that they «would be drowned by the kolkhoz» and that were unable to help the kolkhoz in any way (Danilov, 1970 : 196-202). The activists of the kolkhoz, as well as the ordinary members, did not know when to start the working day and when to finish it, while the division of labor (as a rule) existed only on papers (Dangarova, 1976 : 41, 45). It is admitted that even in 1932, when the kolkhoz spread to cover 75,5 per cent of the arable land, the shortage in specialized productive and administrative personnel was still big⁶ (Kim, 1974 : 265).

History of mankind has shown that people's psychology changes as a result of ripening of social conditions and cannot be measured by years but by many decades and even centuries. The only alternative solution is to force history with all the painful repercussions.

At the end of the 20s, the great majority of Soviet people were not prepared psychologically (and neither could be, objectively) to accept ways of work changing their lives fundamentally. The collectivization was something which seemed to be a matter «for a comparatively remote future» (Bogolyubov, 1983 : 40).

That the objective conditions were not right can be seen by the position of the peasants (poor, middle and upper) who willingly joined cooperatives of ordinary form, while fighting with all their strength against the cooperatives of a higher form (the kolkhoz) in which they would lose ownership on land, tools and animals. The reluctance of the peasants to join the kolkhoz was not due to a wrong policy or to insufficient efforts made on the part of the Soviet rule. The kolkhoz would be given the best land, low interest credits and loans, tractors and means of production weaned from private owners, reductions and complete tax exemption (Stanis, 1976 : 82, 83 ; Vinogradov, 1976 : 3673 and 1977 : 335). Regardless of all this, in 1927, i.e. a whole decade after the revolution, scarcely 0,8 per cent of the peasant families had joined the kolkhoz (National, 1956 : 99).

A peasant, having been forced to join the kolkhoz, would separate from his property with great anguish and pain, while deep in his conscience would remain the feeling of private ownership which would reveal itself by the desire to work on «his» property, using the tools and the horse previously belonging to him (Trifonov, 1975 :289 ; Kim, 1974 :265). At the same time, he would dedicate more time cultivating the small piece of land left over to him for personal use, which

6. The same occurred in other socialist countries. For Bulgaria see (Shopov, 1974 : 64):

he would use any means to expand and transform to «a basic source of income»⁷ (Podkolzhin, 1968 : 267).

A proof that the collectivization was not a natural fruit of ripening of objective conditions constitutes the fact that many regions of the country «passed to socialism from pre-capitalist relations», while others passed «directly from patriarchal relations» (Paspelov, 1971 : 180, 193). There were regions (mainly in Central Asia and Kazakhstan) which joined collectivization even before the finalization of the agrarian reformation (Trifonov, 1975 : 277 ; Vinogradov, 1977 : 365). It is worth noting that the most backward republics of the USSR, as for example, Turkmenistan and Tadjikistan, came to be in the avant - guard of collectivization (National, 1977 :270). A similar event occurred within the frame of the socialist camp. Bulgaria (the most backward of the European countries of COMECON) was the second (after the USSR) country of the world where «the socialist production relations in the village won» (Dragoicheva, 1977 : 45).

III. THE ABOLITION OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

At the end of the 20s, with the help of a most powerful party and state mechanism, loyal and dedicated to the Stalinist leadership, and with the use of economic and extraeconomic methods, started the rapid and violent abolition of the private sector. However, the wiping out of the petty and middle class peasants, craftsmen, merchants and free professionals was not at all easy. They constituted 3/4-4/5 (National, 1956 : 19) of the population, while the theoreticians of Marxism excluded the use of any violence whatsoever against them. Besides that, international experience had consistently proved that while socialization of big ownership does not cause a wide - scale reaction, as it affects a limited number of people, socialization of small - to - medium ownership causes acute and mass reaction, as it affects a great (or even the greatest) part of the population (depending of the degree of development of a country). Especially violent are the reactions of the peasants who have narrow ties with the land. Adjustment to a new way of work

7. Able-bodied kolkhozniki did not realize more than 20-30 workdays per year in the kolkhoz. In 1939, by a resolution of the party and the State, it was defined that those who did not realize at least 60-100 workdays would be expelled from the kolkhoz and lose their rights (Alexandrov, 1967 - 312).

is a long-term and painful process and its acceleration by extraeconomic means creates reactions which can be neutralized only by unconcealed violence.

For the purpose of preparing the ground ideologically and in order to overcome reactions, the leadership of the country let the «Prophets of Doom» loose, spreading rumors about the supposedly return of capitalism, thus creating an atmosphere of class struggle. The creation of such an atmosphere was necessary because the objective conditions were not offering any favourable ground for developing class struggles.

After the thesis of the XV Congress (1927) «for the strengthening of the craftsmen's cooperatives», the private merchants and craftsmen, being unable to suffer the unequal competition and the restrictions⁸ of all kinds, became impoverished, while the cooperative handicraft «thanks to the enormous help of the state» was developed at speedy rates (Trifonov, 1975 : 224). The share of the private sector in retail sale enterprises, from 75 per cent in 1927, dropped to 6 per cent in 1930 and to 0 per cent in 1931 (National, 1956 : 256). The suspension of credits by the state banks granted to private businessmen, had as a result their «fast destruction», while the ever increasing taxation «led whole layers of the bourgeois class to impoverishment» (Trifonov, 1975 : 205- 6).

While the reactions of the merchants, craftsmen and free professionals were overcome relatively easily, the reactions of the peasants to collectivization were persistent and variable, to reach a peak of outcry the moment the State started granting the best pieces of land to the kolkhoz. The reactions were growing bigger and spreading wider as the use of violent methods was progressing. The opposition of the peasants reached its climax in the form of armed revolts (Danilov, 1970 : 204-233 ; Paspelov, 1971 : 174-185). The size and the consequences of this clash can be understood better if it is considered that in the Civil War the Red Army was comprised by private peasants by 77 per cent (Paspelov, 1965 : 122) and that the latter, with the collectivization, lost not only the land they had seized from the landowners, but also the land belonging to them before the revolution.

The way the regimes of the Eastern countries (and especially the Stalin regime) counterfaced the peasants and generally the small - to - medium size pro-

8. In 1930, the cargos of private persons were overcharged by invoice of 50-400 per cent above the normal charge, while the Ministry of transportations was given the right not to carry cargos of private persons (Buzlayeva, 1969:86).

ducers, provides reason to the accusations that existing socialism pursues their complete extermination. The allegations that these accusations «have nothing to do with the reality» (Rudenko, 1971 : 97) are groundless. It suffices to mention that in the USSR, in the period 1929-36, only in the countryside, were exiled, imprisoned and exterminated 800.000 peasant families and liquidated a corresponding number of households. If to the above figure are added 200.000 households which were self-liquidated as their owners escaped to avoid arrest, then it may be concluded that during that period were expelled from their houses about one million of peasant families, according to official Soviet data (Danilov, 1970 : 239). In the other countries following the Soviet model, regardless of the singularities of collectivization, similar prosecutions, though on a relatively smaller scale, took place there too (Fakiolas, 1982 : 167- 174).

IV. CONSEQUENCES

The violent socialization of small to medium scale private ownership, carried out without any previous economic, technical, organizational and psychological preparations, had negative consequences for the economy of the country.

The XIV congress of the CPSU (1925) had set as a task the country, with its economic development, to serve as an extremely powerful means of revolutionizing the workers of the whole world. Half a century, or so, later, labor productivity in the USSR, according to Soviet data, barely reaches 40 per cent of that existing in USA and during the last decade this relationship has remained unchanged (USSR, 1983 : 62).

On the one hand, there is an acute lack of working force, and on the other hand, excluding repairs, more than 40 million people are still engaged in manual work, including about two-fifths of all industrial workers, more than half of those in construction and two-thirds of those in agriculture, trade and cargo handling work (Petrovichev, 1982 : 15). In the field of agriculture, where the transformation of private to collective ownership had the most mass character, productivity remained on a very low level and in the last two decades, has been 4 - 5 times lower than that of USA (USSR, 1984 : 56).

From the XV congress up to the «construction» of socialism (1927-37), the share of collectivization of farming plots increased 116 times and reached 93 per cent and the cultivated land to 99,1 per cent (National, 1956 : 99). These «achieve-

ments» are defined as «victory of the kolkhoz system» and as «convincing proof in practice of the Tightness of the Marxist theory)» (Balatsky, 1980 : 79). As regards the «rightness» of the Marxist theory, this has nothing to do with the way of reforming agriculture carried out so far in the countries of existing socialism, which will be proved in the paragraph to come next. As regards the «victory of the kolkhoz system», it will be enough to mention that the small farming plots, which in the Western countries are unable to compete with the large ones (Tsarev, 1979), in the USSR proved to be more productive in comparison with the kolkhoz.

In 1940, personal farming plots gave 37,2 per cent of the agricultural production of USSR and 54 per cent of the tradeable cattle - breeding and their share in the income of a kolkhoz family amounted to 48,3 per cent, as against 39,7 per cent of the kolkhoz income (National, 1978 : 392). In 1975 these plots, using 1,4 per cent of the arable land, produced 28 per cent of the agricultural produce (Morosov, 1977 : 81-82), while in 1980 the produce (Morosov, 1977 : 81 - 82), while in 1980 the people working on them (though representing hardly 2 per cent of the rural working force), produced with the help of the members of their families 23 per cent of the total agricultural production. These data do not confirm the allegation that «productivity in the social sector of agricultural economy is greater than that of private sector» (Population, 1983 : 158 - 9).

For whole decades on end, the small farming plots of the kolkhozniki have been restricted and criticized anyway (Staroverov, 1976: 116-120). Nowadays, to counterface shortage in foodstuffs, the state is forced to resort to them for the increase of agricultural production, promising them every help possible in the future (Brezhnev, 1981 : 84), while previously it was maintained that «there is no future for them» (Barshov, 1972 : 277).

If taken into consideration that the USSR, which has always been an exporter of cereals and foodstuffs, for two decades now has been forced to import every year tenths of millions of tons of such products, amounting at many billions of dollars, when the arable and agrarian land of the country is more than a seventh of the world's total, then the standpoint implying that the kolkhoz system «has survived the trial of time» and that both the kolkhoz and the sovkhov «have indisputably proved their superiority» (Sharapov, 1976 : 5) does not seem at all convincing. Nor is convincing the standpoint that the experience of the past few decades has confirmed that the course of development initiated by the Soviet agrarian policy «is, indeed, the only correct approach resulting in progress» (Morosov, 1977 :47). On the contrary, the experience of half a century has shown

that collectivization has caused great damage to agriculture of countries which implemented it, «destroying the social status of the peasants» (Rugina, 1983 : 41).

A question arises : Was the failure of collectivization by any chance due to mistakes made in the course of its implementation? The answer is that the mistake is contained in the very idea of collectivization and not in the way of its implementation. An analysis of the level of development of the countries which adopted collectivization, shows that none of them had the necessary preconditions (see Fakiolas, 1982). Such preconditions were not available even in the most advanced countries of the world and there is no indication of their probable existence in our century. It becomes obvious that the tree of collectivization has been unable to give good fruits because it was planted in futile soil and at unsuitable time and its roots, growing by technical methods, were and remained rotten.

V. MARXIST THEORY

The complete abolition of the private sector of the economy with extraeconomic methods constituted a downright distortion of the proclamations of the theoreticians of the Marxism, to whom it never even occurred that for the transition from private to collective ownership would have to be exiled, imprisoned and exterminated millions of petty to middle class peasants, merchants and craftsmen. It has to be noted that Marx considered the possibility of not using violent means even against the big capitalist owners, as it was possible, under certain conditions, to avoid their violent expropriation. «Marx often expressed his point of view to me—wrote Engels—that it would cost us less if we could buy them out» (Marx, Engels, 1962a : 253). However, Stalin not only did not try to buy the big capitalists out and use their experience, knowledge and economic means the way Marx indicated and Lenin pursued with the NEP, but he rejected cooperation even with the natural allies of the revolution—the small - to medium size producers.

In the Soviet Union and, consequently, in the other, countries of existing socialism, with the use of extraeconomic methods were created hundreds of thousands of productive cooperatives and tenths of millions of small - to - medium size producers lost their means of production at a time, which was still too far from the stage of ripening that would allow the transition from private to collective ownership. The alienation of the Marxist theory from everyday practice was so great that any activities of the private producers, even of the smallest ones, were examined non in the light of rising of the economy but in the light of an even-

tual benefit that the private sector might gain. In the USSR, for example, it is admitted that the temporary suspension of administrative restrictions on small trade and the facilities granted to the craftsmen in the Summer of 1925 «contributed to the rising of productive forces». Simultaneously, however, it is stressed that «the capitalist elements succeeded in gaining benefits from these measures» (Trifovov, 1975 : 240-1).

The private producers, no matter to which category they belonged to, were treated by the party and state media with contempt and hostility. Even the small peasant, when he was private, was characterized as backward and not conscientious (Danilov, 1970 :205). The above come in downright contradiction to the statements of Engels, who was underlining that the small peasant (as well as the small craftsman) is a worker who differs from the contemporary proletarian in that he himself owns the tools of his work (Marx, Engels, 1962a : 506).

Marx and Engels thought and consistently underlined that the transition of the peasants to collective cultivation of land should be voluntary and gradual. Specifically, Marx was emphasizing that the peasant should transfer from private to collective land ownership on his own, by economic methods and that «we should not take the peasant by surprise, proclaiming, for example, the abolition of the hereditary rights or the abolition of his private ownership» (Marx, Engels, 1961a : 612). At the same time, Marx was warning : «Make an attempt, beyond a certain limit, to take away from the peasants the product of their toil, and then, in spite of your gendarmery and your army, you will never succeed in pinning them to their fields» (Marx, Engels, 1961b : 408).

Engels was also suggesting that the duty of people's power before the small producers of the village consists, above all, in «the transfer of their private production and ownership to and that «having the state power, we do not think of expropriating the small peasants (either with indemnity or without, that does not matter), the way we shall be forced to do with the landowners» (Marx, Engels, 1962a : 518). Engels was remarking that the feeling of private property runs in the blood of the peasant and that the harder the struggle for the small piece of land becomes, the greater and more desperate the insistence with which he would catch on it ; and the more he would be inclined to see in anyone demanding the transfer of land ownership to the hands of society such a dangerous enemy, as the usurer and the lawyer (Marx, Engels, 1962a : 507).

A fact, showing how hastily the transition from private to collective ownership was made, is the example of Bulgaria, which in only one year, nationalized

almost half, and in 3 - 4 years, 90 per cent of its industry (Cherneikp, 1977 : 131). The socialization of such a vital sector of the economy, at such a large scale and in such a short period of time, at that, in such an underdeveloped country, has nothing to do with the laws of economic evolution and Marxist theory. Even more exemplary are the cases of Cuba and Mongolia which, even if belonging together with Vietnam, to the most underdeveloped countries of the COMECON, socialized 100 per cent of their industry and handicraft (Statistics, 1983 : 61), and in this field they surpassed countries like East Germany, Poland, Hungary, etc., regardless of the fact that the latter are much more developed than the former. It is obvious that the transition of Cuba and Mongolia from private to state and cooperative forms of ownership was effected (and could not be otherwise) extraeconomic methods and in violation of Marxist teaching.

Marx was writing that a considerable part of the members of the German communist party «are angry with me because I criticize their utopias and promises» (Marx, Engels, 1962b : 412). It is doubtless that the critical examination of the promises and deeds of the leadership of the countries of existing socialism, where any right to express contrary opinion has actually vanished, today even for Marx would have the same wellknown consequences, i. e. he could be characterized as an enemy of Marxism and of the peoples interest and suffer the applicable to the given cases sanctions. Ae Rugina (1983 : 8) remarks, if Karl Marx had a chance to come back and watch what his revolution has created he could not remain silent and probably would end in jail.

CONCLUSIONS

In the 20s and the 30s in the USSR, and in the postwar period in the other countries of COMECON, the level of development did not allow the complete, virtually, socialization of the means of production. The wiping out of the private sector was achieved through extraeconomic methods, which led to a devastating clash with the private peasants, merchants, craftsmen and free professionals, comprising the greater majority of the population.

The domination of feudalism over slavery, and of capitalism over feudalism, is due to the fact that each one of them developed a higher in comparison with the former, productivity of labor. Marx, as well as other like Ricardo for example, saw the determinative criterion of a higher form of society exactly in the labor productivity. However, the countries of existing socialism, and especially the So-

viet Union, could not develop a comparatively higher productivity, while Czechoslovakia, which before the transformation of its social system was in a more advanced technological level than it is today and consisted an example of a dynamic development, has fallen in a technological decay and its position is constantly deteriorating on an international scale.

The leaders of the countries following the Soviet model have proved with their deeds (directly or indirectly) the correctness of Marxist theory, but in a negative way. They accomplished exactly what Marxism consistently demanded to be avoided, with the result to fail in their economic competition with capitalism and not to be able to prove the advantages of a new and socially higher system, as socialism is. The determinative cause of this failure lies in the abrogation of free dialogue and democratic procedures, having as a consequence the development of their countries not to follow the laws of economy and social evolution.

To the personal opinion of the underwriter, which was formed during the long years of his stay in the Soviet Union, as well as during his multiple trips to the country lately, the scientific world of the USSR is its majority realizes to a smaller or greater degree, that the abolition of private ownership on the means of production before the availability of the right necessary conditions, has had painful consequences for the country not only in the economic field. At the same time, they fully comprehend and feel that any fundamental transformation is interlaced with extraordinary great difficulties, as it presupposes the collapse of the political and ideological structure on which rested all Soviet leaders, from Stalin till today.

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